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Indonesia at UN Decol. Committee

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations
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Statement by Mr. Abdul Nasier

Before the Meeting of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

New York, 13 July 1994

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation has consistently maintained that the people or East Timor have exercised their right to self-determination by opting for independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia in 1976. We therefore oppose the granting of hearings and the consideration of the so-called question of East Timor.

Furthermore, we firmly believe that the appropriate and only forum to seek an internationally acceptable solution is the ongoing tripartite dialogue held between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. To make this undertaking successful, Indonesia's detractors should refrain from two-faced posturing and extend their genuine support to the dialogue as a viable mechanism.

During the last round of talks held between the respective Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal in May 1994, it was agreed to exercise restraint in order to maintain an atmosphere conducive for further progress leading to a settlement of the question. The next meeting is scheduled to be held during January 1995. Meanwhile talks will be held between the representatives of the two Governments in New York. It is our earnest hope that the next dialogue will lead to positive results.

Indonesia has resolutely demonstrated its good faith in these endeavors by extending full cooperation with the Secretary-General in exploring ways and means for a viable solution. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that a series of confidence-building measures were agreed on 17 September 1993 during a meeting held between the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal which inter alia included the need to create a favorable and non-confrontational atmosphere in order to facilitate a settlement; the importance of promoting respect for human rights in all their indivisible aspects and fundamental freedoms in East Timor; and in this context the implementation of the recommendations contained in the consensus statement by the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights of 4 March 1992; and the continuation of efforts to promote a balanced exchange of visits by journalists and personalities of their respective countries.

As indisputable proof of its goodwill in implementing the agreed confidence- building measures aimed at fostering an atmosphere propitious to addressing the substance of the question, Indonesia has taken some concrete steps. In this connection, I would like to briefly state some of them.

The Indonesian Government has continued to provide access to East Timor on a regular basis to foreign representatives, parliamentary missions, journalists and others. During the past year, visits were made possible to the province by the Secretary-General's representatives, Mr. Francesc Vendrell and Mr. Tamrat Samuel on 19-23 January 1994, Dr. Manuel Tilman, an East Timorese lawyer, 9 foreign correspondents, a Delegation of 25 foreign journalists representing 16 print and electronic media organizations from various countries, and 26 East Timorese residing in Portugal. I am also pleased to inform that the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Execution, Mr. Bacre Wali Ndiaye, has concluded his visit to Indonesia including the Province of East Timor.

Likewise, many international agencies in East Timor are operating including the ICRC, CRS, UNICEF and others. These organizations continue to function freely in the province and are working closely and in cooperation with the Provincial Government. For example, the ICRC continues its protection program such as visiting prisoners including Xanana Gusmao and others.

We are heartened by the establishment of the Portugal-Indonesia Friendship Association (PIFA) on 20 September 1993 and its counterpart, the Indonesian-Portuguese Friendship Association (IPFA) on 17 January 1994 whose main objective is to increase and strengthen cultural and historical ties between the peoples of both countries.

Mr. Chairman,

It is most regrettable to note that some quarters continue to perpetrate the myth of a large Indonesian military presence on the island. Let me correct this baseless accusation and inform this Committee that since security and public order has vastly improved in the province, the East Timor Military Operation Command has been dissolved and replaced by a regular District Command as in any other province of Indonesia. Furthermore, the remaining military forces have begun phasing out, from the earlier stationing of 8 battalions to only 2, and 7 out of 8 among them are involved in civic missions.

Since the incident of 12 November 1991, the Indonesian Government has exerted every effort in continuing the search for missing persons but with limited success. It is pertinent to note that our Foreign Minister continues to keep the UN Secretary-General apprised of the investigation. The number of those now unaccounted for has been reduced to 56.

There is complete freedom of cultural expression in East Timor. It is the established policy of Indonesia to develop the cultural heritage of each ethnic group of the nation, including East Timor, to maintain the rich cultural diversity of the Indonesian people. In this regard, the Indonesian Government is committed to preserving Portuguese relics in the province. A number of Catholic churches built by Portugal during its period of colonization have been renovated and restored by the East Timor Administration.

As to the "expanded family reunion" program, 59 East Timorese have been granted permission to leave for Portugal. Also, based on humanitarian considerations, 7 East Timorese youth who tried last year to seek asylum in foreign embassies were allowed to leave for Portugal last December. In addition, Indonesia has approved requests from a number of East Timorese currently residing in Portugal and Angola to return to Indonesia. In a reconciliatory meeting in London, representatives of East Timorese in Indonesia and those living in Portugal met during December 1993 and agreed to hold further contacts. This should go a long way in impacting positively on confidence-building measures.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me also to set the historical record straight once again in response to some misrepresentation of facts and allegations made concerning the former colony. From the very beginning, Indonesia extended its co-operation to Portugal with the avowed aim of reaching a peaceful and orderly decolonisation of East Timor. This was evidenced by a series of meetings held between the two sides in New York, in September 1974; Lisbon in October 1974; London in March 1975; Jakarta in August and September 1975 and Rome in November 1975.

Tragically, before an agreement could be reached, the situation in the territory was aggravated by the colonial authorities' abrupt abandonment of its responsibilities and it handing over ammunition and weapons to the one minority party. Thereafter, civil war erupted when this minority group unleashed a reign of terror against its own people and unilaterally declared independence. In response to the chaos and strife, the three other political parties in line with UN resolution 1541 voted overwhelmingly for independence through integration with Indonesia.

What Portugal has tried over the years is to portray an image of helping the East Timorese people gain their independence. But, this assistance is 18 years too late. It should have been forthcoming much earlier. Decolonisation has taken place in accordance with Resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XV) when the East Timorese exercised their right to self-determination and independence through integration.

As to the involvement of the United Nations, principle IX (b) of resolution 1541 (XV), which states in regard to integration, "the United Nations could, when it deems necessary, supervise these processes." It is clear therefore that the participation of the United Nations is not mandatory, yet the Provisional Government of East Timor throughout 1976, had spared no effort in trying to involve the Organization in that process but all of these invitations were regrettably accorded a negative response. Moreover, members of the Committee are well aware that many nations have gained their independence without resort to implementation of the provisions prescribed in resolution 1514 (XV). In fact, in some, the colonial powers simply departed, often leaving the country in disarray and self-destructive civil wars continue to this day.

In East Timor, it is true that the process of decolonization was tumultuous due to the hasty departure of the colonial power and the attempt by one minority party to seize power by force of arms rather than through

democratic methods. But, nevertheless, there was a clear expression by four political parties representing the overwhelming majority of the population as to their real wishes for the kind of independence they desired which was through integration with Indonesia. This brief chronology of events which my delegation has reiterated on past occasions shows that the Indonesian Government's only role was in responding to the expression of the true will of the people of East Timor.

Mr. Chairman,

It is indisputable that during the past eighteen years since integration with the Republic of Indonesia, the East Timorese people have achieved substantial and tangible progress in all aspects of life than they did throughout the entire previous era. To bring the province of East Timor to the level of other provinces, the Central Government has allocated and continues to allocate a much larger per capita budget for East Timor than to any other province. In this connection, let me inform that the Government is allocating approximately 624 million rupiahs for a development project which involves 312 underdeveloped villages in the province. Priorities continue to be aimed at agriculture, education, public housing, communications and other infrastructures. The development efforts have as their primary goals, the improvement of the welfare of the people of East Timor, which have yielded most encouraging results. From a perennial short-fall in food production, it is now up by 600,000 tons per year. East Timor has now cut back its dependence on other Indonesian provinces for the supply of, for example, reception in the highlands. Likewise, a private radio station has been established. The steady expansion of the economy is reflected by increased domestic investment which at the end of the year 1993, amounted to Rp. 232.64 billion.

In the educational arena, during the fiscal year 1993, 250 teachers were assigned to East Timor which includes, 125 for elementary schools, 55 for junior high schools and 70 for senior high schools. These teachers will be given special training to meet the educational needs of the province.

Mr. Chairman,

Based on the actual situation prevailing in East Timor today and the fact that the province is an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia for nearly two decades, my Delegation sincerely hopes, that this Committee will finally decide that the inclusion and discussion of the question of East Timor can serve no purpose. Let me also add, to support integration is to respect the aspirations of the people of East Timor; to be against it is to oppose the will of the East Timorese people and to thwart their right to political, economic and social development.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.